



Marjorie Cook Foundation
Domestic Violence Legal Clinic

2201 Argonne Dr • Baltimore, Maryland 21218 • 410-554-8463 • dlennig@hruthmd.org.

SUPPORT WITH AMENDMENTS SENATE BILL 17

January 26, 2022

DOROTHY J. LENNIG, LEGAL CLINIC DIRECTOR

The House of Ruth is a non-profit organization providing shelter, counseling, and legal representation to victims of domestic violence throughout the State of Maryland. Senate Bill 17 sets out a training program for judges who preside over child custody cases that involve child abuse or domestic violence. **We urge the Senate Judicial Proceedings Committee to amend and report favorably report on Senate Bill 17.**

House of Ruth supports the intent of SB 17 and believes it is important that judges receive training about the impact of domestic violence and trauma on victims and children. However, SB 17, as drafted, is too restrictive. House of Ruth suggests the bill be amended to strike all language starting on page 2, line 3. For many years, including as recently as Fall, 2021, House of Ruth staff have conducted judicial trainings about many of these topics. What we have learned is that the training needs of the Judiciary change over time to keep pace with new research, trends, and developments regarding domestic violence and the impacts of trauma on victims and children. The very pointed list of subjects in this current bill may (or may not) be the important topics today, but may not remain the priorities in the future. SB 17, as drafted, requires trainings on the same topics year after year and does not leave room for flexibility or discretion without another act of the Legislature. That is too rigid and unworkable a framework to have the intended beneficial effect.

House of Ruth is happy to continue to work with the Maryland Judiciary to develop a training program, and hopes the Legislature will afford the Judiciary the flexibility needed to craft a training curriculum that will best address the needs of Maryland's children.

The House of Ruth urges the Senate Judicial Proceedings Committee to amend SB 17 and report favorably.